

1 SEMICONDUCTOR PROCESSOR SYSTEMS, SYSTEMS
2 CONFIGURED TO PROVIDE A SEMICONDUCTOR WORKPIECE
3 PROCESS FLUID, SEMICONDUCTOR WORKPIECE PROCESSING
4 METHODS, METHODS OF PREPARING SEMICONDUCTOR
5 WORKPIECE PROCESS FLUID, AND METHODS OF DELIVERING
6 SEMICONDUCTOR WORKPIECE PROCESS FLUID TO A
7 SEMICONDUCTOR PROCESSOR

8 RELATED PATENT DATA

9 The present application is a continuation-in-part of Patent
10 Application Serial No. 09/324,737 which was filed on June 3, 1999 and
11 which is incorporated by reference herein.

12 TECHNICAL FIELD

13 The present invention relates to semiconductor processor systems,
14 systems configured to provide a semiconductor workpiece process fluid,
15 semiconductor workpiece processing methods, methods of preparing
16 semiconductor workpiece process fluid, and methods of delivering
17 semiconductor workpiece process fluid to a semiconductor processor.

18 BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

19 Numerous semiconductor processing tools are typically utilized
20 during the fabrication of semiconductor devices. One such common
21 semiconductor processor is a chemical-mechanical polishing (CMP)
22 processor. A chemical-mechanical polishing processor is typically used
23 to polish or planarize the front face or device side of a semiconductor
24 wafer. Numerous polishing steps utilizing the chemical-mechanical

1 polishing system can be implemented during the fabrication or processing
2 of a single wafer.

3 In an exemplary chemical-mechanical polishing apparatus, a
4 semiconductor wafer is rotated against a rotating polishing pad while an
5 abrasive and chemically reactive solution, also referred to as a slurry,
6 is supplied to the rotating pad. Further details of chemical-mechanical
7 polishing are described in U.S. Patent No. 5,755,614, incorporated herein
8 by reference.

9 A number of polishing parameters affect the processing of a
10 semiconductor wafer. Exemplary polishing parameters of a
11 semiconductor wafer include downward pressure upon a semiconductor
12 wafer, rotational speed of a carrier, speed of a polishing pad, flow rate
13 of slurry, and pH of the slurry.

14 Slurries used for chemical-mechanical polishing may be divided into
15 three categories including silicon polish slurries, oxide polish slurries and
16 metals polish slurries. A silicon polish slurry is designed to polish and
17 planarize bare silicon wafers. The silicon polish slurry can include a
18 proportion of particles in a slurry typically with a range from 1-15
19 percent by weight.

20 An oxide polish slurry may be utilized for polishing and
21 planarization of a dielectric layer formed upon a semiconductor wafer.
22 Oxide polish slurries typically have a proportion of particles in the
23 slurry within a range of 1-15 percent by weight. Conductive layers
24 upon a semiconductor wafer may be polished and planarized using

1 chemical-mechanical polishing and a metals polish slurry. A proportion
2 of particles in a metals polish slurry may be within a range of 1-5
3 percent by weight.

4 It has been observed that slurries can undergo chemical changes
5 during polishing processes. Such changes can include composition
6 and pH, for example. Furthermore, polishing can produce stray
7 particles from the semiconductor wafer, pad material or elsewhere.
8 Polishing may be adversely affected once these by-products reach a
9 sufficient concentration. Thereafter, the slurry is typically removed from
10 the chemical-mechanical polishing processing tool.

11 It is important to know the status of a slurry being utilized to
12 process semiconductor wafers inasmuch as the performance of a
13 semiconductor processor is greatly impacted by the slurry. Such
14 information can indicate proper times for flushing or draining the
15 currently used slurry.

16 17 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

18 The present invention relates to semiconductor processor systems,
19 systems configured to provide a semiconductor workpiece process fluid,
20 semiconductor workpiece processing methods, methods of preparing
21 semiconductor workpiece process fluid, and methods of delivering
22 semiconductor workpiece process fluid to a semiconductor processor.

23 According to certain aspects of the present invention, a control
24 system is configured to monitor a process fluid within a semiconductor

processor system. The control system is configured to control operations of the semiconductor processor system responsive to such monitoring of the process fluid.

One aspect of the present invention provides a mixing system configured to mix plural components to form a process fluid. The disclosed control system is configured to monitor and control such mixing operations. The semiconductor processor system also provides a sampling system according to other aspects of the invention. The sampling system is configured to draw and monitor samples of a process fluid. Another aspect of the invention provides a flush system and recirculation system configured to respectively flush and recirculate fluid within an associated connection of the semiconductor processor system. Additional aspects of the invention provide monitoring of a connection for accumulation of particulate matter. The disclosed control system monitors such accumulation and implements responsive operations.

The present invention provides additional structure and methods as disclosed below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Preferred embodiments of the invention are described below with reference to the following accompanying drawings.

Fig. 1 is an illustrative representation of a slurry distributor and semiconductor processor.

Fig. 2 is an illustrative representation of an exemplary arrangement for monitoring a static slurry.

Fig. 3 is an illustrative representation of an exemplary arrangement for monitoring a dynamic slurry.

Fig. 4 is an isometric view of one configuration of a turbidity sensor.

Fig. 5 is a cross-sectional view of another sensor configuration.

Fig. 6 is an illustrative representation of an exemplary arrangement of a source and receiver of a sensor.

Fig. 7 is a functional block diagram illustrating components of an exemplary sensor and associated circuitry.

Fig. 8 is a schematic diagram of an exemplary sensor configuration.

Fig. 9 is a schematic diagram illustrating circuitry of the sensor configuration shown in Fig. 6.

Fig. 10 is a schematic diagram of another exemplary sensor configuration.

Fig. 11 is an illustrative representation of a sensor implemented in a centrifuge application.

Fig. 12 is a functional block diagram of an exemplary semiconductor processor system.

Fig. 13 is a functional block diagram of exemplary components of the semiconductor processor system.

1 Fig. 14 is an illustrative representation of an exemplary process
2 chamber of a semiconductor processor.

3 Fig. 15 is a functional block diagram of an exemplary control
4 system of the semiconductor processor system.

5 Fig. 16 is a functional block diagram of an exemplary mixing
6 system of the semiconductor processor system.

7 Fig. 17 is a graphical representation of precipitation of particulate
8 matter within a process fluid having no surfactants.

9 Fig. 18 is a graphical representation of precipitation of particulate
10 matter within a process fluid having a surfactant.

11 Fig. 19 is a graphical representation of a precipitation signature
12 of an exemplary process fluid.

13 Fig. 20 is a graphical representation of turbidity of a process fluid
14 during operations of the semiconductor processor system.

15 Fig. 21 is a functional representation of an exemplary flush system
16 of the semiconductor processor system.

17 Fig. 22 is a functional representation of an exemplary recirculation
18 system of the semiconductor processor system.

19 Fig. 23 is an illustrative representation of another exemplary
20 configuration of the process chamber of the semiconductor processor
21 system.

22 Fig. 24 is an isometric view of a connection within the
23 semiconductor processor system.
24

1 Fig. 25 is a flow chart of an exemplary method to control mixing
2 operations of the mixing system.

3 Fig. 26 is a flow chart of an exemplary method to control
4 sampling operations of a sampling system of the semiconductor processor
5 system.

6 Fig. 27 is a flow chart of an exemplary method to control flush
7 operations of the flushing system.

8 Fig. 28 is a flow chart of an exemplary method to control
9 recirculation operations of the recirculation system.

10 Fig. 29 is a flow chart of an exemplary method to monitor
11 accumulation of particulate matter within a connection of the
12 semiconductor processor system.

13
14 **DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS**

15 This disclosure of the invention is submitted in furtherance of the
16 constitutional purposes of the U.S. Patent Laws "to promote the
17 progress of science and useful arts" (Article 1, Section 8).

18 Referring to Fig. 1, a semiconductor processing system 10 is
19 illustrated. The depicted semiconductor processing system 10 includes
20 a semiconductor processor 12 coupled with a distributor 14.
21 Semiconductor processor 12 includes a process chamber 16 configured
22 to receive a semiconductor workpiece, such as a silicon wafer. In an
23 exemplary configuration, semiconductor processor 12 is implemented as
24 a chemical-mechanical polishing processing tool.

1 Distributor 14 is configured to supply a subject material for use
2 in semiconductor workpiece processing operations. For example,
3 distributor 14 can supply a subject material comprising a slurry to
4 semiconductor processor 12 for chemical-mechanical polishing applications.

5 Exemplary conduits or piping of semiconductor processing
6 system 10 are shown in Fig. 1. In the depicted configuration, a static
7 route 18 and a dynamic route 20 are provided. Further details of
8 static route 18 and dynamic route 20 are described below with reference
9 to Figs. 2 and 3, respectively. In general, static route 18 is utilized to
10 provide monitoring of the subject material of distributor 14 in a
11 substantially static state. Such provides real-time information regarding
12 the subject material being utilized within semiconductor processing
13 system 10. Dynamic route 20 comprises a recirculation and distribution
14 line in one configuration. In addition, subject material can be supplied
15 to semiconductor processor 12 via dynamic route 20.

16 Distributor 14 can include an internal recirculation pump (not
17 shown) to periodically recirculate subject material through dynamic
18 route 20. Subject material having particulate matter, such as a slurry,
19 experiences gravity separation over time. Separation of such particulate
20 matter of the slurry is undesirable. For example, the particulate matter
21 may settle in areas of piping, valves or other areas of a supply line
22 which are difficult to reach and clean. Further, some particulate matter
23 may be extremely difficult to resuspend once it has settled over a
24 sufficient period of time. Accordingly, it is desirable to monitor

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1 turbidity (percent solids within a liquid) of the subject material to
2 enable reduction or minimization of excessive settling.

3 Referring to Fig. 2, details of an exemplary static route 18
4 coupled with distributor 14 are illustrated. Static route 18 includes an
5 elongated tube or pipe 19 for receiving subject material from
6 distributor 14. In a preferred embodiment, pipe 19 comprises a
7 transparent or translucent material, such as a transparent or translucent
8 plastic. Static route 18 is coupled with distributor 14 at an intake
9 end 22 of pipe 19. Piping hardware provided within the depicted static
10 route 18 includes an intake valve 24, sensors 26 and an exhaust
11 valve 28. Exhaust valve 28 is adjacent an exhaust end 30 of static
12 route 18.

13 Valves 24, 28 can be selectively controlled to provide monitoring
14 of the subject material of distributor 14 in a substantially static state.
15 For example, with exhaust valve 28 in a closed state, intake valve 24
16 may be selectively opened to permit the entry of subject material within
17 an intermediate container 32. Container 32 can be defined as the
18 portion of static route 18 intermediate intake valve 24 and exhaust
19 valve 28 in the described configuration. In typical operations, intake
20 valve 24 is sealed or closed following entry of subject material into
21 container 32. In the depicted arrangement, static route 18 is provided
22 in a substantially vertical orientation. Static route 18 using
23 valves 24, 28 and container 32 is configured to provide received subject
24

one or more sensors 26, the rate of separation can be monitored providing information regarding the condition of the subject material or slurry (e.g., testing and quantifying characteristics of a CMP slurry).

Properties of the subject material can be derived from the monitoring including, for example, how well particulate matter is suspended, adequate mixing, amount of or effectiveness of surfactant additives, the approximate size of the particulate matter, agglomeration of particulate matter, slurry age or lifetime, and likelihood of slurry causing defects. Such monitoring of settling rates can indicate when to change or drain a slurry being applied to semiconductor processor 12 to avoid degradation in processing performance, such as polishing performance within a chemical-mechanical polishing processor.

Subject material within container 32 may be drained via exhaust valve 28 following monitoring of the subject material. Exhaust end 30 of static route 18 can be coupled with a recovery system for direction back to distributor 14, or to a drain if the subject material will not be reused.

Referring to Fig. 3, details of dynamic route 20 are described. Dynamic route 20 comprises a recirculation pipe 50 coupled with a supply connection 52. Recirculation pipe 50 and supply connection 52 preferably comprise transparent or translucent tubing or piping, such as transparent or translucent plastic pipe.

Recirculation pipe 50 includes an intake end 54 and a discharge end 56. Subject material or slurry can be pumped into recirculation

1 monitor the turbidity of subject material within supply connection 52.
2 Additionally, a supply valve 66 controls the flow of subject material
3 within supply connection 52.

4 Although only one supply connection 52 is illustrated, it is
5 understood that additional supply connections can be provided to couple
6 associated semiconductor processors (not shown) with recirculation
7 pipe 50 and distributor 14. The depicted supply connection 52 is
8 arranged in a vertical orientation. Supply connection 52 with associated
9 sensor 26 may also be provided in a horizontal or other orientation in
10 other configurations.

11 Referring to Fig. 4, an exemplary configuration of sensor 26 is
12 shown. The illustrated configuration of sensor 26 includes a housing 70,
13 cover 72 and associated circuit board 74. The illustrated housing 70
14 is configured to couple with a conduit, such as supply connection 52.
15 For example, housing 70 is arranged to receive supply connection 52
16 with a longitudinal orifice 76. Cover 72 is provided to substantially
17 enclose supply connection 52. In a preferred arrangement, housing 70
18 and cover 72 are formed of a substantially opaque material.

19 Housing 70 is configured to provide source 40 and receiver 42
20 adjacent supply connection 52. More specifically, housing 70 is
21 configured to align source 40 and receiver 42 with respect to supply
22 connection 52 and any subject material such as slurry therein. In the
23 depicted configuration, housing 70 aligns source 40 and receiver 42 to
24 define an optical axis 45 which passes through supply connection 52.

The illustrated housing 70 is configured to allow attachment of sensor 26 to supply connection 52 or detachment of sensor 26 from supply connection 52 without disruption of the flow of subject material within supply connection 52. Housing 70 can be clipped onto supply connection 52 as illustrated or removed therefrom without disrupting the flow of subject material within supply connection 52 in the described embodiment.

Source 40 and receiver 42 may be coupled with circuit board 74 via internal connections (not shown). Further details regarding circuitry implemented within circuit board 74 are described below. The depicted sensor configuration provides sensor 26 capable of monitoring the turbidity of subject material within supply connection 52 without contacting and possibly contaminating the subject material or without disrupting the flow of subject material within supply connection 52.

More specifically, sensor 26 is substantially insulated from the subject material within supply connection 52 in the described arrangement. Accordingly, sensor 26 provides a non-intrusive device for monitoring the turbidity of subject material 80. Such is preferred in applications wherein contamination of subject material 80 is a concern. Utilization of sensor 26 does not impede or otherwise affect flow of the subject material.

In one configuration, source 40 comprises a light emitting diode (LED) configured to emit infrared electromagnetic energy. Source 40 is configured to emit electromagnetic energy of another

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1 wavelength in an alternative embodiment. Receiver 42 may be
2 implemented as a photodiode in an exemplary embodiment.
3 Receiver 42 is configured to receive electromagnetic energy emitted from
4 source 40. Receiver 42 of sensor 26 is configured to generate a signal
5 indicative of the turbidity of the subject material and output the signal
6 to associated circuitry for processing or data logging.

7 Referring to Fig. 5, source 40 and receiver 42 are coupled with
8 electrical circuitry 78. In the illustrated embodiment, source 40 and
9 receiver 42 are aimed towards one another. Source 40 is operable to
10 emit electromagnetic energy 79 towards subject material 80. Particulate
11 matter within subject material 80 operates to absorb some of the
12 emitted electromagnetic energy 79. Accordingly, only a portion,
13 indicated by reference 82, of the emitted electromagnetic energy 79
14 passes through subject material 80 and is received within receiver 42.

15 Electrical circuitry 78 is configured to control the emission of
16 electromagnetic energy 79 from source 40 in the described configuration.
17 Receiver 42 is configured to output a signal indicative of the received
18 electromagnetic energy 82 corresponding to the intensity of the received
19 electromagnetic energy. Electrical circuitry 78 receives the outputted
20 signal and, in one embodiment, conditions the signal for application to
21 an associated computer 84. In one embodiment, computer 84 is
22 configured to compile a log of received information from receiver 42
23 of sensor 26.
24

1 during operation of semiconductor workpiece system 10. Information
2 from sensors 26 can be accessed via rotary couplings or wireless
3 configurations during rotation of container 102 in exemplary
4 embodiments.

5 From the foregoing, it is apparent the present invention provides
6 a sensor which can be utilized to monitor turbidity of a nearly opaque
7 fluid. Further, the disclosed sensor configurations have a wide dynamic
8 range, are nonintrusive and have no wetted parts. In addition, the
9 sensors of the present invention are cost effective when compared with
10 other devices, such as densitometers.

11 Referring to Fig. 12, components of an exemplary semiconductor
12 processor system 200 are shown. The depicted semiconductor processor
13 system 200 includes a process fluid system 202, a semiconductor
14 processor 204, and a control system 206 coupled with process fluid
15 system 202 and semiconductor processor 204.

16 Process fluid system 202 is configured in the described
17 embodiment to apply process fluid to semiconductor processor 204. An
18 exemplary semiconductor processor 204 comprises a chemical-mechanical
19 polisher, such as a Model 6DSP available from Strasbaugh, Inc. An
20 exemplary process fluid includes a slurry for use in chemical-mechanical
21 polishing of semiconductor workpieces. Exemplary semiconductor
22 workpieces include semiconductor wafers, such as silicon wafers.

23 Semiconductor processor 204 is configured to receive semiconductor
24 workpieces and provide processing of the semiconductor workpieces.

1 Control system 206 is configured to monitor operations of process fluid
2 system 202 and semiconductor processor 204 and control operations of
3 semiconductor processor system 200 including system 202 and
4 processor 204 responsive to such monitoring.

5 Referring to Fig. 13, further details of process fluid system 202
6 and semiconductor processor 204 are illustrated. Process fluid
7 system 202 includes a mixing system 210, a sampling system 212, a
8 distributor 214, a flush system 216 and a recirculation system 218. The
9 depicted semiconductor processor 204 includes a process chamber 220
10 and a drain system 222.

11 Process fluid system 202 is configured to provide process fluid,
12 such as a slurry, to process chamber 220. Mixing system 210 of
13 process fluid system 202 is coupled with plural component sources
14 external of semiconductor processor system 200 in the described
15 embodiment. Exemplary component sources individually include one of
16 a concentrated solids component and a clear fluid component.

17 Mixing system 210 is configured to receive and provide mixing of
18 such components to form a desired process fluid for use within
19 semiconductor processor 204. Sampling system 212 is configured to
20 selectively draw a sample of process fluid from mixing system 210.
21 Sampling system 212 is configured to monitor a drawn sample as
22 described further below. Sampling system 212 provides the drawn
23 sample in a substantially static state to provide such monitoring in the
24 described embodiment.

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1 Flush system 216 is configured to selectively prime and/or rinse
2 connection 215 responsive to control from control system 206 of Fig. 12.
3 Flush system 216 is configured to flush connection 215 with a flush
4 fluid. As described below, flush system 216 is configured to utilize a
5 flush fluid comprising one of a process fluid and a rinse fluid.

6 As shown, flush system 216 is coupled with a rinse fluid source,
7 such as a de-ionized water source. In the described embodiment, flush
8 system 216 is operable to prime connection 215 with flush fluid
9 comprising the process fluid responsive to a start-up operation of
10 semiconductor processor 204, and to rinse connection 215 with flush
11 fluid comprising the rinse fluid responsive to a halt operation.

12 One exemplary process chamber 220 comprises a chemical-
13 mechanical polisher process chamber in the described embodiment.
14 Details of process chamber 220 are illustrated, for example, in
15 Stephen A. Campbell, The Science and Engineering of Microelectronic
16 Fabrication, pp. 253-257 (1996), incorporated herein by reference. Other
17 configurations of process chamber 220 are possible.

18 Referring to Fig. 14, an exemplary process chamber 220 is shown.
19 Process chamber 220 includes a table 205 having a polishing pad 207
20 thereover in the described embodiment. As shown, polishing pad 207
21 includes a polishing surface 209 configured to polish semiconductor
22 workpiece W. In other arrangements, polishing surface 209 is provided
23 in a web (roll to roll) or other implementation.
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1 A wafer carrier 208 positions one or more semiconductor
2 workpiece W opposite polishing pad 207. A slurry is deposited upon
3 polishing pad 207 as shown. The semiconductor workpiece W is
4 brought into contact with polishing pad 207 to implement processing of
5 semiconductor workpiece W. Either one or both of wafer carrier 208
6 and table 205 are rotated during processing.

7 Referring to Fig. 15, an exemplary configuration of control
8 system 206 is shown. The depicted control system 206 includes a
9 process fluid system controller 226 and a semiconductor processor
10 controller 228. A bus 230 couples process fluid system controller 226
11 and semiconductor processor controller 228.

12 Process fluid system controller 226 and semiconductor processor
13 controller 228 are implemented as individual microprocessors,
14 industrial PLCs or personal computers (PC) in an exemplary
15 configuration. In an alternative arrangement, the control operations of
16 semiconductor processor system 200 are implemented within a single
17 controller. Additional distributed controllers are provided in yet another
18 embodiment to control operations of semiconductor processor system 200.

19 As illustrated, an interface 232 and memory 234 are coupled with
20 bus 230 and respective controllers 226, 228. Interface 232 includes a
21 display, such as a monitor, and an input, such as a keyboard,
22 respectively configured to display operational status of semiconductor
23 processor 204 and to receive commands from an operator.
24 Interface 232 additionally includes a connection to couple with a remote

Referring to Fig. 16, details of one exemplary configuration of mixing system 210 are illustrated. The depicted mixing system 210 includes a dedicated mixer controller 240. Mixer controller 240 is implemented as a microprocessor in the described embodiment. Mixer controller 240 communicates with process fluid system controller 226. Control information and mixing data is exchanged intermediate controllers 226, 240.

Mixer controller 240 is configured to control the mixing of components to form a process fluid for utilization within semiconductor processor system 200. Mixing system 210 includes plural supply lines or connections 242, 243 coupled with respective component sources. For example, supply line 242 is coupled with a concentrated solids component source and supply line 243 is coupled with a clear fluid component source. Such components are mixed in the described embodiment to form a chemical-mechanical polishing slurry. Other process fluids are formed in other embodiments.

Mixing system 210 includes metering devices 244, 245, such as pumps, coupled with respective supply lines 242, 243. Plural sensors 246 are also coupled with respective supply lines 242, 243. Sensors 246 are configured to monitor turbidity in the described arrangement. Sensors 246 are implemented using the sensor configurations 26 described above with reference to Fig. 4 in one configuration. Sensors 246 are individually configured to monitor turbidity of a material passing through an associated connection. Other

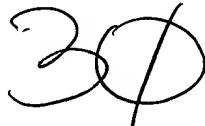
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1 configurations of sensors 246 are possible. For example, sensors 246
2 comprising acoustic sensors, resistive sensors, densitometers, etc. are
3 implemented in alternative arrangements.

4 Supply lines 242, 243 form inputs to mixer 248. Mixer 248 is
5 operable to provide mixing of components supplied via lines 242, 243
6 to provide a homogeneous process fluid in the described embodiment
7 of the invention. During typical process operations, a process fluid,
8 such as a slurry, is provided to process chamber 220. During chemical-
9 mechanical polishing operations, the slurry contains particulate matter
10 utilized to polish a surface of a semiconductor workpiece. It is desired
11 to provide the slurry within a substantially homogeneous state before
12 application to process chamber 220 and the polishing of associated
13 semiconductor workpieces.

14 Output connection 249 couples mixer 248 with an output of mixing
15 system 210. Sensor 246 is illustrated coupled with output
16 connection 249. Output connection 249 provides a connection configured
17 to supply the process fluid to sampling system 212 and distributor 214.

18 Sensors 246 are individually coupled with mixer controller 240.
19 Sensors 246 are configured to output a signal indicative of the
20 respective components or materials flowing through respective
21 connections 242, 243, 249. The signals from sensors 246 are applied
22 to mixer controller 240. Mixer controller 240 is considered part of
23 control system 206 and is configured to control the mixing of the
24 components responsive to the received signals.



1 The signals from sensors 246 provide feedback input to mixer
2 controller 240 which in turn controls metering devices 244, 245 and the
3 corresponding flow rates of respective components. For example,
4 sensors 246 are configured in the described embodiment to provide
5 turbidity information to mixer controller 240 regarding the fluids or
6 materials within respective connections 242, 243, 249.

7 If the signal outputted from sensor 246 indicates an inappropriate
8 range of turbidity for the process fluid flowing through output
9 connection 249, mixer controller 240 controls the flow rates of the
10 respective components using metering devices 244, 245. For example,
11 the flow rate of metering device 244 is increased to increase the flow
12 of concentrated solids if the process fluid within connection 249 should
13 have increased turbidity. If the turbidity of the process fluid within
14 connection 249 is too high as measured by sensor 246, mixer
15 controller 240 controls metering device 245 to increase the flow rate of
16 the clear fluid component to mixer 248.

17 Sensors 246 provide additional information regarding the condition
18 of respective components within supply lines 242, 243. Turbidity
19 information of respective process fluid components are detected using
20 sensors 246 which provide feedback information to mixer controller 240.
21 Thereafter, mixer controller 240 utilizes information from sensors 246
22 coupled with supply lines 242, 243 to adjust metering devices 244, 245
23 to maintain the process fluid within connection 249 within the desired
24 turbidity range.

1 Referring to Fig. 17 - Fig. 20, sampling operations of
2 semiconductor processor system 200 are described. Sampling system 212
3 of Fig. 13 is coupled to receive the process fluid within output
4 connection 249 of mixing system 210. Sampling system 212 draws a
5 sample to monitor the condition of the process fluid.

6 Sampling system 212 is implemented using static route 18
7 described above with reference to Fig. 2 or static route 18a illustrated
8 in Fig. 11 in exemplary configurations. For example, intake end 22 of
9 static route 18 is coupled with connection 249 to receive process fluid.
10 Other arrangements of sampling system 212 are utilized in other
11 embodiments. One of such static route devices 18, 18a is coupled in
12 the described embodiment to connection 249 containing the process fluid
13 to be delivered to semiconductor processor 204. As described above,
14 static route devices 18, 18a are configured to provide a sample of the
15 process fluid in a substantially static state.

16 Static route devices 18, 18a include sensors 26 configured to
17 monitor the turbidity of the process fluid. Such can be implemented
18 using plural sensors 26 to provide differential turbidity measurements of
19 the process fluid at different physical positions, or a single sensor 26
20 to provide a turbidity measurement at one position of the static
21 route 18, 18a. Other monitoring operations include obtaining differential
22 turbidity information of process fluid with respect to time (e.g.,
23 obtaining turbidity measurements at an initial moment in time and a
24 subsequent moment in time). Such can be implemented with static or

dynamic samples of process fluid. Sensor configurations other than sensors 26 are utilized in other configurations to monitor the samples of process fluids.

Exemplary process fluid fingerprints or signatures 260, 260a are respectively illustrated in Fig. 17 and Fig. 18. The graphical representations of Fig. 17 - Fig. 18 display turbidity information of process fluid samples versus time. Turbidity is measured using the output voltage of sensors 26 of static routes 18, 18a in the described arrangement.

Process fluids such as slurries typically have an associated signature corresponding to precipitation rates of particulate matter within the process fluid. For example, the process fluid yielding the signature 260 in Fig. 17 contains no surfactant. The process fluid yielding the signature 260a illustrated in Fig. 18 includes a surfactant additive and precipitates at an increased rate compared with the process fluid graphed in Fig. 17.

As shown, the two process fluids provide different signatures 260, 260a corresponding to different precipitation rates. Depending upon the processing implemented within semiconductor processor 204, variances of the process fluid from a desired signature may produce undesirable processing results. For example, inappropriate pH ranges, the freezing of process slurry, as well as other conditions may adversely impact the process fluid resulting in undesirable processing performance. Utilizing sampling system 212 and sensors

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1 therein, control system 206 can compare a sample of process fluid
2 within connection 249 with a desired signature to determine at least one
3 characteristic of the process fluid.

4 Referring to Fig. 19, an ideal or control process fluid
5 signature 262 is illustrated. Such is provided for a given processing
6 application and for comparison with the signatures of actual process
7 fluids within connection 249. Process fluid signature 262 is empirically
8 derived or determined through test processing operations of
9 semiconductor workpieces in exemplary embodiments to determine an
10 ideal process fluid.

11 Following the determination of the ideal process fluid
12 signature 262, process fluid signature limits 264 are developed to
13 provide an acceptable range of fluctuation of the associated process
14 fluid tested during processing operations with respect to the ideal
15 process fluid signature 262. Acceptable deviation of the actual process
16 fluid from the ideal process fluid signature is determined to set
17 limits 264. Such limits 264 are chosen such that processing of
18 semiconductor workpieces is not adversely impacted by utilization of
19 process fluids within the range defined by limits 264.

20 During processing operations, control system 204 controls the
21 appropriate sampling device of the sampling system 212 to receive a
22 sample of process fluid. The sample is preferably provided in a
23 substantially static state yielding an exemplary signature. The signature
24 of the process fluid being tested is compared with the ideal

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signature 262 and process fluid signature limits 264. Control system 204 is configured to develop the signatures using data acquisition of information outputted from sensors within sampling system 212.

If the observed signature of the sample being tested falls within process fluid signature limits 264, the process fluid is acceptable and is applied to semiconductor processor 204 for processing. If it is determined that the signature of the sample of process fluid is outside of process fluid signature limits 264, control system 204 is configured to selectively prevent the entry of the process fluid into process chamber 220 of semiconductor processor 204. For example, process fluid may be flushed prior to application to distributor 214 using drain system 222. Thereafter, a new batch of process fluid may be mixed and tested using sampling system 212 to assure application of acceptable process fluid to process chamber 220.

Control system 204 implements a comparison of the actual sample of process fluid versus the ideal process fluid signature 262 and associated limits 264 to monitor the condition of the process fluid. Typical signatures of process fluids include three tiers indicating different precipitation rates over time. Such tiers may be utilized for comparison. A first tier of the signatures is from time 0 to the moment in time t_0 shown in Fig. 19. The second tier of the signatures is intermediate the moments in time t_0 - t_1 . A third tier of the signatures is shown after the moment in time t_1 .

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1 During an exemplary comparison procedure, slopes of the
2 signatures are measured between two points of one of the tiers and are
3 compared with process fluid signature limits 264. Such comparison
4 operations by process fluid system controller 226 detect the state of the
5 process fluid being analyzed. For example, the analysis can detect large
6 particulate precipitation, the amount or effectiveness of surfactant or
7 suspension additives, agglomeration formed from freezing or excessive
8 shearing. Such conditions or qualities of the process fluid affect the
9 polishing performance of semiconductor processor 204. Other methods
10 of analyzing a process fluid are utilized in other embodiments.

11 Responsive to the comparison, process fluid system controller 226
12 instructs semiconductor processor controller 228, if appropriate, to cease
13 operation of semiconductor processor 204 until process fluid is brought
14 within specification. Subsequent batches of process fluids are sampled
15 using sampling system 212. Alternatively, processing within
16 semiconductor processor 204 proceeds if the process fluid is within
17 specification.

18 Referring to Fig. 20, an exemplary representation of the turbidity
19 of process fluid entering semiconductor processor 204 during different
20 modes of operation of semiconductor processor 240 is illustrated. In
21 one embodiment of the invention, process fluid system controller 226
22 monitors the mode of operation of semiconductor processor 204 and
23 determines the appropriate time for implementing process fluid functions
24 within process fluid system 202.

For example, for times intermediate t_0 and t_1 , semiconductor process 204 implements a polishing cycle. Accordingly, process fluid system 202 delivers process fluid using connection 249 and provides a homogeneous process fluid of substantially constant turbidity as indicated in the graphical representation.

At time t_1 , the polishing cycle is finished and semiconductor processor 204 enters an idle state. Accordingly, process fluid system 202 is idle after time t_1 until time t_2 . At time t_2 , a start polish command is issued. The turbidity of the process fluid is lower at time t_2 due to settling of particulate matter within the process fluid during the idle state.

Following the initiation of a polishing cycle, the turbidity begins to increase as process fluid flows within connection 249 and returns again at time t_3 to a substantially homogeneous mixture. At time t_4 , the second polishing cycle ceases and once again the turbidity of the process fluid falls as particulate matter settles within the process fluid. As shown, the turbidity of the process fluid fluctuates depending upon the operation of semiconductor processor 204.

The monitoring of process fluid is conducted according to the mode of operation of semiconductor processor 204 in one embodiment. For some monitoring operations, it is desired to observe or obtain a signature of the process fluid when the process fluid is in a homogeneous state. Accordingly, samples using sampling system 212 are

1 drawn at a specified period of time when the process fluid is in a
2 homogeneous state.

3 For example, sampling operations may be implemented intermediate
4 times t_0 and t_1 and times t_3 and t_4 to observe a homogeneous process
5 fluid. Process fluid system controller 226 monitors the state of
6 operation of semiconductor processor 204 utilizing instructions or
7 information from semiconductor processor controller 228. Once
8 semiconductor processor 204 is in an operating condition intermediate
9 times t_0 and t_1 and times t_3 and t_4 , process fluid system controller 226
10 instructs sampling system 212 to draw a sample of process fluid to
11 determine the appropriate signature.

12 In general, control system 206 is configured to monitor the
13 operation of semiconductor processor 204. Control system 206 is further
14 configured to control sampling system 212 to draw an appropriate
15 sample during defined periods of operation of semiconductor
16 processor 206 wherein the process fluid is in a substantially
17 homogeneous state. During other monitoring operations, it is preferred
18 to draw samples of the process fluid during idle periods of time such
19 as at time t_2 , or at other periods of time during the operation of
20 semiconductor processor 204.

21 Referring to Fig. 21, details of an exemplary flush system 216 are
22 illustrated. Flush system 216 is coupled with distributor 214 and
23 recirculation system 218 of process fluid system 202, and drain
24 system 222 of semiconductor processor 204. Flush system 216 is

coupled directly with process chamber 220 instead of recirculation system 218 in other arrangements.

The depicted configuration of flush system 216 comprises an isolation valve 272, a rinse fluid valve 274, a metering device 276, a sensor 246 and a three-way valve 278. Connection 215 provides a supply of process fluid to flush system 216. In addition, flush system 216 is coupled with a rinse fluid source. The rinse fluid source includes a de-ionized water source in the described embodiment. Flush system 216 operates at the beginning of process cycles and at the end of process cycles of semiconductor processor 204 in the described configuration.

Connection 215 is configured to transport process fluid relative to process chamber 220 of semiconductor processor 204. Responsive to control from process fluid system controller 226, flush system 216 is configured to prime a portion of connection 215 within flush system 216 prior to processing within semiconductor processor 204. Flush system 216 is further configured to rinse the portion of connection 215 within flush system 216 following the end of a processing cycle within semiconductor processor 204.

For example, during the initiation of a processing cycle corresponding to a start-up operation of semiconductor processor 204, process fluid system controller 226 is configured to control flush system 216 to prime connection 215. Flush system 216 is configured

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1 to prime connection 215 with process fluid responsive to the start-up
2 operation.

3 During priming operations responsive to a start-up operation of
4 semiconductor processor 204, flush system 216 ensures the provision of
5 a homogeneous process fluid within connection 215. In particular,
6 process fluid system controller 226 operates three-way valve 278 to
7 couple connection 215 with drain system 222 of semiconductor
8 processor 204. Thereafter, isolation valve 272 is opened and rinse fluid
9 valve 274 is closed. Process fluid flows through connection 215 and
10 into drain system 222.

11 As described above, settling of particulate matter can occur during
12 idle periods of operation of semiconductor processor 204. Therefore,
13 it is desired to flow process fluid through connection 215 until the process
14 fluid reaches a desired homogeneous mixture inasmuch as the use of
15 process fluid before it has reached a homogeneous state often results
16 in undesirable processing.

17 Thus, process fluid system controller 226 operates valve 278 to
18 couple connection 215 with drain system 222 of semiconductor
19 processor 204. Metering device 276 flows process fluid from
20 distributor 214 through connection 215 into drain system 222. During
21 such flowing, sensor 246 is configured to monitor the turbidity of the
22 process fluid. Sensor 246 is coupled with process fluid system
23 controller 226 which compares the output voltage of sensor 246 with a
24 desired voltage corresponding to a desired turbidity of the process fluid.

40

Once the desired turbidity is obtained within the flowing process fluid as indicated by sensor 246, process fluid system controller 226 operates valve 278 to couple connection 215 with process chamber 220. Thereafter, the processing of semiconductor workpieces is begun with the utilization of homogeneous process fluid.

Sensor 246 is also utilized to provide turbidity information during processing of workpieces within semiconductor processor system 200. The utilization of sensor 246 enables monitoring of operations of system 200 and components therein in general. For example, if valve 274 is defective and leaks rinse fluid during normal processing operations wherein rinse fluid is not utilized, such is detected using sensor 246. Process fluid system controller 226 alarms semiconductor processor controller 228 of such diluted process fluid and processing is halted immediately. Sensors 246 located throughout semiconductor processor system 200 also provide monitoring of processing operations and control system 206 provides alarming of inappropriate process conditions.

Flush system 216 is utilized in the described embodiment during halt operations of semiconductor processor 204. More specifically, control system 206 is configured to control flush system 216 to rinse connection 215 responsive to a halt operation within semiconductor processor 204.

In the described arrangement, semiconductor processor controller 228 instructs process fluid system controller 226 that

semiconductor processor 204 is entering a halt operation. Responsive to semiconductor processor 204 entering a halt state of operation, process fluid system controller 226 again couples connection 215 with drain system 222 of semiconductor processor 204 using valve 278. Process fluid system controller 226 also closes isolation valve 272 and opens rinse fluid valve 274. Metering device 276 provides rinse fluid through connection 215 and into drain system 222. Such is preferably utilized to rinse connection 215 of process fluid to avoid the settling of particulate matter within connection 215 during idle periods of operation.

During such rinsing operations, process fluid system controller 226 monitors the turbidity of fluid passing through connection 215 using sensor 246. Once the turbidity falls below a certain value (indicating a desired clarity of fluid within connection 215), process fluid system controller 226 instructs rinse fluid valve 274 to close and ceases rinsing operations.

Process fluid system controller 226 thereafter awaits reception of a start-up command to again initiate the priming operations of connection 215. Such monitoring of the turbidity of the fluid within connection 215 during flushing (e.g., priming, rinsing) operations is advantageous inasmuch as flushing is ended immediately following an indication that the turbidity of the fluid within connection 215 has reached a desired range. This described operation advantageously avoids excessive flushing for determined periods of time which typically occurs in conventional systems and wastes process fluids or other fluids.

1 Referring to Fig. 22, an exemplary configuration of a recirculation
2 system 218 is depicted. The depicted recirculation system 218 is
3 coupled with distributor 214 via flush system 216. Recirculation
4 system 216 is further coupled with process chamber 220 of
5 semiconductor processor 204. In an alternative embodiment, recirculation
6 system 218 is coupled to receive process fluid directly from
7 distributor 214.

8 Recirculation system 216 includes a recirculation route 282 coupled
9 with connection 215. Recirculation system 218 additionally includes a
10 recirculation valve 284, an isolation valve 286, a metering device 288,
11 a sensor 246 and a three-way valve 290. As described above, during
12 idle periods of operation of semiconductor processor 204, particulate
13 matter within the process fluid may settle within connection 215. Upon
14 a start-up operation, application of such process fluid to process
15 chamber 220 may result in undesirable processing of semiconductor
16 workpieces.

17 Recirculation system 218 is operable to recirculate process fluid
18 within connection 215 to a proper homogeneous level before application
19 to process chamber 220. Control system 206, including process fluid
20 system controller 226, is configured in the described embodiment to
21 control recirculation system 218 responsive to a state of operation
22 indicated from semiconductor processor controller 228 and output signals
23 from sensor 246. In general, process fluid system controller 226 is
24 configured to control recirculation system 218 to recirculate the process

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1 fluid responsive to the process fluid being out of the desired turbidity
2 specification in the described embodiment.

3 During normal operations wherein process fluid flows through
4 connection 215, recirculation valve 284 is closed and isolation valve 286
5 is opened. Metering device 288 operates to pump process fluid from
6 distributor 214 (or flush system 216, if provided) to process
7 chamber 220 through sensor 246 and three-way valve 290 positioned to
8 couple connection 215 with process chamber 220.

9 Following a halt in operation of semiconductor processor 204,
10 isolation valve 286 is closed. In addition, three-way valve closes the
11 coupling of connection 215 with process chamber 220. Particulate
12 matter typically precipitates from the process fluid within connection 215
13 resulting in the process fluid being out of specification during halt
14 operations.

15 Upon the reception of a start-up indication from semiconductor
16 processor controller 228, it is desired to provide homogeneous process
17 fluid. In the described embodiment, process fluid system controller 226
18 initiates a recirculation procedure utilizing recirculation system 218. In
19 such a recirculation operation, recirculation valve 284 is opened and
20 three-way valve 290 couples connection 215 with recirculation route 282.
21 Metering device 288 operates to pump process fluid through
22 connection 215 and recirculation route 282.

23 Sensor 246 monitors process fluid flowing within connection 215.
24 In the described embodiment, sensor 246 is configured to monitor the

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1 turbidity of such process fluid. Process fluid system controller 226
2 monitors the turbidity of the process fluid during the recirculation
3 operations. Following an indication from sensor 246 that the turbidity
4 of the process fluid is within the desired specification (i.e., has reached
5 the appropriate homogeneous mixture), process fluid system
6 controller 226 instructs recirculation system 218 to cease recirculation
7 operations and to apply the process fluid from connection 215 to
8 process chamber 220. More specifically, recirculation valve 284 is closed
9 and three-way valve 290 is provided to couple connection 215 with
10 process chamber 220 responsive to control from process fluid system
11 controller 226.

12 Referring to Fig. 23, an alternative configuration of process
13 chamber 220a is illustrated. Process chamber 220a depicted in Fig. 23
14 includes a drain collection area 292, a table 294 and a pad 296. A
15 connection 291 couples a polish fluid source with pad 296. In the
16 described configuration of process chamber 220a, the polish fluid
17 comprises a nonparticulate polishing fluid.

18 Pad 296 is a fixed abrasive or slurry generating pad in the
19 depicted configuration of process chamber 220a. Table 294 is
20 configured to support a semiconductor workpiece W. At least one of
21 table 294 (and semiconductor workpiece W) and pad 296 are configured
22 to rotate with respect to one another to provide processing of the
23 semiconductor workpiece W. Polish fluid is applied to semiconductor
24 workpiece W during such rotation. Abrasives or particulates within

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1 pad 296 are released responsive to the application of the polishing fluid
2 and rotation against semiconductor workpiece W to provide the
3 processing.

4 Such generates a process fluid which is collected within drain
5 collection area 292. The process fluid passes through a connection 293
6 to drain system 222. Connection 293 couples drain collection area 292
7 with drain system 222. Sensor 246 is positioned to monitor process
8 fluids passing through connection 293.

9 In addition, a connection 297 is provided adjacent pad 296.
10 Connection 297 is coupled with a vacuum source, such as a pump,
11 which acts to extract or draw a portion of the generated process fluid
12 from pad 296. The drawn process fluid includes particulate matter from
13 pad 296 released during the processing of semiconductor workpiece W.
14 Sensor 246 coupled with connection 297 is configured to monitor the
15 turbidity of the process fluid drawn from pad 296.

16 As previously mentioned, sensor 246 coupled with connection 293
17 is configured to monitor process fluid passing through connection 293.
18 Such fluid can contain particulate matter from pad 296, portions of
19 semiconductor workpiece W removed during the processing procedures,
20 polish fluid supplied via connection 291 and other matter.

21 Fluid drawn within connection 297 is typically free of contaminants
22 such as portions of semiconductor workpiece W which may break during
23 the processing thereof. Fluid drawn from pad 296 within
24

connection 297 typically indicates the status of the process fluid during processing of semiconductor workpiece W.

As mentioned, sensors 246 are configured to monitor the turbidity of fluids passing through respective connections 293, 297. In effect, control system 206 processes signals from sensors 246 to monitor processing of a semiconductor workpiece within process chamber 220. Such monitoring indicates abnormal particle generation resulting from under or over pad wear. In addition, sensor 246 coupled with drain connection 293 may detect pieces of semiconductor workpiece W indicating workpiece breakage.

Semiconductor processor controller 228 monitors sensors 246 coupled with connections 293, 297 and controls operations within process chamber 220a responsive to such signals. For example, if breakage of semiconductor workpiece W is indicated as detected by sensor 246 coupled with connection 293, processing is halted and process chamber 220a is analyzed for faulty operation.

Referring to Fig. 24, one exemplary configuration of a sensor 280 is illustrated with respect to connection 215. Although Fig. 24 is described with reference to connection 215, the operation of sensor 280 is applicable to other connections.

In the depicted configuration, sensor 280 is implemented as a configuration of sensor 26 described above with reference to Fig. 4. More specifically, the depicted sensor 280 includes source 40 configured to emit electromagnetic energy and receiver 42 configured to receive the

1 electromagnetic energy. As described above, such is utilized to provide
2 a turbidity indication of process fluid flowing within connection 215.

3 The arrangement of sensor 280 shown in Fig. 24 is configured to
4 output a signal indicative of accumulation of particulate matter within
5 connection 215. During idle operations, process fluid, such as a slurry,
6 sits idle within connection 215. Particulate matter 299 precipitates from
7 a fluid portion 298 of the process fluid.

8 In the depicted arrangement, connection 215 is arranged in a
9 substantially horizontal orientation. Such horizontally oriented
10 connections are highly susceptible to such precipitation of particulate
11 matter 299 as shown. The configuration of sensor 280 is arranged to
12 monitor such accumulation of particulate matter 299 in a substantially
13 vertical orientation with respect to connection 215. Source 40 is
14 configured to emit electromagnetic energy downward towards receiver 42.
15 Such provides increased sensitivity to the accumulation of particulate
16 matter 299 within connection 215.

17 Sensor 280 is coupled with process fluid system controller 226 of
18 control system 206 in the described embodiment. Process fluid system
19 controller 226 is configured to monitor the accumulation of particulate
20 matter 299 responsive to signals provided from sensor 280.

21 Following the monitoring of the accumulation of particulate
22 matter 299, control system 206 implements various functions or
23 operations of semiconductor processor system 200. In one embodiment,
24 control system 206 implements such functions and operations described

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Referring to Fig. 25, an exemplary methodology to control mixing operations within mixing system 210 is described. Initially, at step S10, process fluid controller 226 monitors for the reception of an appropriate mixing command. Semiconductor processor controller 228 issues such a command responsive to a start-up operation of semiconductor processor 204. Controller 226 idles at step S10 until the reception of the appropriate mixing command.

Controller 226 proceeds to step S12 following the reception of the mixing command. Process fluid system controller 226 issues mix commands during step S12. Exemplary mix commands instruct metering devices 244, 245 to pump at predefined flow rates and instruct mixer 248 to turn on.

Controller 226 then proceeds to step S14 to read output signals from one or more of sensors 246 illustrated in Fig. 16.

Controller 226 next proceeds to step S16 to determine whether received sensor output signals are within an appropriate range. In the described embodiment, sensors 246 are configured to output signals indicative of turbidity of material passing through an associated connection as described above. If the output from sensors 246 are not within an appropriate range, controller 226 proceeds to step S18.

At step S18, controller 226 issues commands to adjust metering devices 244, 245. Such adjustment of metering devices 244, 245 adjusts the flow rates of one or more of the components utilized to form the process fluid.

1 Thereafter, controller 226 proceeds again to step S14 to read
2 sensor output signals and then proceeds to step S16 to determine
3 whether the sensor output is within the appropriate range.

4 Controller 226 proceeds to step S20 responsive to the output
5 signals from the sensors being within the desired appropriate range as
6 determined at step S16. At step S20, controller 226 indicates that the
7 process fluid is within a desired specification. Such indication is applied
8 to semiconductor processor controller 228 to initiate processing of
9 semiconductor workpieces.

10 Referring to Fig. 26, an exemplary methodology to control
11 operations of sampling system 212 using process fluid system
12 controller 226 is illustrated.

13 Initially, at step S30, controller 226 determines whether a sample
14 of process fluid is desired. Samples are taken on a period basis or
15 responsive to a command from interface 232 or semiconductor processor
16 controller 228 in one embodiment. Controller 226 idles at step S30
17 until it is indicated that a sample is desired.

18 Next, controller 226 proceeds to step S32 to read semiconductor
19 processor status (e.g., operational state of semiconductor processor 204)
20 from controller 228.

21 At step S34, controller 226 determines whether the status
22 determined at step S32 is appropriate for sampling. In some
23 arrangements, it is desired to receive a sample when the process fluid
24

1 is in a homogeneous state as described above with reference to Fig. 20.
2 Controller 226 idles at step S34 until the desired status is correct.

3 Controller 226 then proceeds to step S36 to issue a command to
4 draw a sample of process fluid responsive to semiconductor 204 being
5 within a proper operating state. Valve 24 shown in Fig. 2 is opened
6 responsive to step S36 to receive the sample in one configuration.

7 Controller 226 then proceeds to step S38 to read sensor output
8 from an appropriate sensor following the drawing of the sample.

9 At step S40, controller 226 determines whether the sensor output
10 is within an appropriate range. The analyzed range comprises an
11 acceptable turbidity range in the described operation.

12 If so, controller 226 proceeds to step S42 to indicate that the
13 process fluid is within desired specification. Such may be indicated to
14 controller 228 to initiate or continue processing of semiconductor
15 workpieces.

16 If the sensor output is not within an appropriate range as
17 determined at step S40, controller 226 proceeds to step S44 and issues
18 a halt command to controller 228. Thereafter, controller 226 issues a
19 command to drain process fluid from sampling system 212. The
20 depicted methodology of Fig. 26 is repeated until a sample is drawn
21 which is within the appropriate desired range.

22 Referring to Fig. 27, an exemplary methodology to control flush
23 system 216 using process fluid system controller 226 is illustrated.
24

Initially, controller 226 proceeds to step S50 to determine whether an appropriate flush command has been received. Such flush command is triggered responsive to a start-up command in one configuration. Controller 226 idles at step S50 until reception of the appropriate flush command.

Thereafter, controller 226 proceeds to step S52 to indicate the performance of a flush operation. Such indication is provided to controller 228 and interface 232 in the described methodology.

Thereafter, controller 226 proceeds to step S54 to initiate flushing of an appropriate connection with flush fluid. In particular, controller 226 issues commands to components of flush system 216 to implement priming and/or rinsing of the appropriate connection.

Controller 226 then proceeds to step S56 to read sensor output from flush system 216.

At step S58, controller 226 determines whether the received sensor output is within an appropriate desired range. The analyzed range comprises an acceptable turbidity range in the described embodiment.

If not, controller 226 returns to perform steps S54, S56, S58 again until the sensor output is within an appropriate range.

Controller 226 then proceeds to step S60 to indicate that the flush operation is completed. Such indication is provided to controller 228 and interface 232. Subsequent processing or operations of semiconductor processor system 200 continue following the execution of step S60.

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Referring to Fig. 28, an exemplary methodology is depicted for control of recirculation system 218 by process fluid system controller 226.

Initially, controller 226 proceeds to step S70 to determine whether an appropriate recirculation command has been received. Such recirculation command is triggered following a period of inactivity of semiconductor processor 204 according to the described configuration. Controller 226 idles at step S70 until reception of an appropriate recirculation command.

Thereafter, controller 226 proceeds to step S72 to indicate the performance of a recirculation operation. Such indication is provided to controller 228 and interface 232 in the described methodology.

Controller 226 next proceeds to step S74 to initiate recirculation of process fluid within recirculation system 218. In particular, controller 226 issues commands to components of recirculation system 218 to implement the recirculation operation.

Controller 226 then proceeds to step S76 to read sensor output from a sensor of recirculation system 218.

At step S78, controller 226 determines whether the received sensor output is within an appropriate desired range. The range comprises an acceptable turbidity range of a process fluid within recirculation system 218 in one embodiment.

If not, controller 226 returns to perform steps S74, S76, S78 again until the sensor output is within an appropriate range.

Controller 226 then proceeds to step S80 to indicate that the recirculation operation is completed. Such indication is provided to controller 228 and interface 232. Subsequent processing or operations of semiconductor processor system 200 continue following the execution of step S80.

Referring to Fig. 29, one exemplary methodology to monitor the accumulation of particulate matter within a connection is illustrated.

Initially at step S90, controller 226 determines whether it is appropriate to monitor the accumulation of such particulate matter. Such can be a timed operation or an entered instruction from interface 232 in exemplary embodiments. Controller 226 idles at step S90 until an appropriate instruction or time-out period has elapsed.

At step S92, controller 226 reads the appropriate sensor output.

Thereafter, controller 226 proceeds to step S94 to determine whether the sensor output is within an appropriate range. The analyzed output is from a turbidity sensor in accordance with the described embodiment. No steps are taken responsive to the sensor output and any accumulation being within an acceptable range.

If the sensor output is not within an appropriate range, controller 226 proceeds to step S96 to indicate the presence of such accumulation. Such indication is provided to controller 228 and interface 232 in the described embodiment.

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At step S98, controller 226 initiates a flush and/or recirculation operation to clear the accumulated particulate matter within the associated connection.

Controller 226 then returns to step S92 and again reads the appropriate sensor output. The depicted method is performed until the condition at step S94 is satisfied.

In compliance with the statute, the invention has been described in language more or less specific as to structural and methodical features. It is to be understood, however, that the invention is not limited to the specific features shown and described, since the means herein disclosed comprise preferred forms of putting the invention into effect. The invention is, therefore, claimed in any of its forms or modifications within the proper scope of the appended claims appropriately interpreted in accordance with the doctrine of equivalents.

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